

**DECISION NOTICE - CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY RELATED**  
**Key Executive Decision taken by the Strategic Director (CF)**

**KEY DECISION Subject:** 2 Temporary Accommodation Officer posts – fixed term for 18 months. 3 posts within the income team, again fixed term for 18 months. Finally 3 specialist support workers in the Independent Living Team, fixed term for 6 months.

**DECISION TAKER:**

**Name:** Clare Fletcher

**Job Title:** Strategic Director and S.151 Officer

**Signature:**

**Date:** September 24<sup>th</sup> 2020

**RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CONSULTED:**

**Name:** Jeannette Thomas

**Job Title:** Portfolio Holder for Housing Health and Older people

**Signature:** J E Lloyd portfolio holder for resources on behalf of Jeannette Thomas

**Date:** September 24<sup>th</sup>2020

**REASON WHY THIS DECISION DID NOT APPEAR ON THE FORWARD PLAN AND THE URGENCY PROVISIONS WERE NOT FOLLOWED:**

This key decision was taken as part of the Council's emergency response to the national COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the necessary speed of decision taking at this time it was not possible to comply with the Council's Constitution that includes the requirement to give 28 days' notice of the decision to be taken; publish details 5 clear days before the decision was taken; publish the decision within 2 days of it being taken; and provide the 5 day call-in period before implementation. Nor was it possible to comply with the Urgency provisions in the Constitution

**DECISION TAKEN:**

To recruit to an additional 2 Temporary Accommodation Officers, fixed term for 18 months to manage the increase in the number of clients in council

owned temporary and emergency accommodation as well as those residing in B&B hotel accommodation, should our own accommodation not be available .

To recruit 3 additional posts in the Income team, fixed term for 18 months to support council tenants and aid the recovery of arrears that have accrued due to the impact of Covid 19.

To recruit 3 additional Specialist Support workers, fixed term for 6 months in the Independent Living Team to support the delivery of services to vulnerable customers who rely on the interaction with their support workers.

### **REASONS FOR DECISION:**

#### Increasing staffing resources in the Temporary Accommodation team

The total number of applicants accommodated within Emergency/ Temporary Accommodation stood at 144 on 17<sup>th</sup> September with 31 of these cases being placed in B+B. Since the start of March 2020 the Council has experienced a 48% increase in B+B use and a steady increase in the number of households accommodated in the Council's own Emergency/ Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA) due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It's recognised that this client group has chaotic and often complex needs which require intensive support and management. Given the increase in clients additional resources are required to manage this. To manage and support the additional number of households placed in EA/TA the Council needs to recruit 2 additional Temporary Accommodation Officers. This will mean each TA officer would have approx. 20-30 households to intensively manage and support.

The Council will also use its Flexible Housing Support Grant to recruit an additional 2 officers, a Housing Supply Caseworker and a Housing Options worker to help ensure homelessness applications are managed in a timely way and to enable people to secure permanent accommodation for their use.

A combination of these resources will enable the team to support these clients whilst they are at their most vulnerable and ensure that we have the resources to secure accommodation for this client group.

#### Additional staffing resources for the Income team

Rent arrears have doubled from £620,000 at the end of August 2019 to £1.2 million at the end of August 2020. There has been an increase in the number of cases claiming Universal Credit and the value of arrears attributed to these cases has increased to £821,000. The team are also responsible for collecting rent and arrears from those in emergency and temporary accommodation (see above). 3 additional posts in the Income team are required to provide support to customers who are new claimants and require additional support as well as those who are furloughed and may potentially become redundant over the passage of time.

### Additional Specialist Support Workers within the Independent Living Service

A number of workers within the team have had to shield due to the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore three additional posts Specialist Support Workers are required to enable the service to continue to deliver the high level of support required by users.

Month 2020	Contact pipe or telephone	visits	Response to emergency calls	Welfare checks / follow up checks or visits
March	4404	1941	513	183
April	7192	658	486	216
May	5912	872	586	293
June	6037	1793	538	212
July	5683	1998	565	253
August	4910	1879	557	280

The Council will also use staff members redeployed from other areas to maintain the service.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The nine posts will add additional pressure to the Housing Revenue Account as follows:

Post	Salary (£)	Grade	Length of contract	Annual cost	Total cost
2 x Temporary accommodation officers	34,599	5	18 months fixed term contract	£69,198	£103,797
	34,599	5			
3 x Income posts	34,599	5	18 months fixed term contract	£113,923	£170,885
	34,599	5			
	44,725	7			
3 x specialist support workers	17,299	5	6 months fixed	£51,876	£51,876

	17,299	5	term		
	17,299	5	contract		
This assumes on costs and includes pension contributions so would be the maximum commitment.				<b>£234,997</b>	<b>£326,558</b>

This then does cause a problem in terms of the level of spend, but this can be offset by a decrease in borrowing costs and therefore within the net amount. Delegated to Executive for the HRA.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The additional resources will enable us to better discharge our duties under the various sections of the relevant housing acts in particular our powers under part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) as well as complying with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.

**EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:**

Putting the additional resources in place will ensure that no specified groups are disadvantaged due to the measures set in place by Government.

**CONSULTATIONS:**

Both the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing have been consulted and support the decisions taken.

**Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

I agree that this decision was reasonable in all the circumstances, was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred

I further agree that any delay likely to be caused by the call -in process would prejudice the Council's or the public interest and that the decision should not therefore be subject to call-in.

**Signed: Lin Martin-Haugh**

**Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 30 September 2020**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION: 30 September 2020**